

ADMONITIONS

IN RELATION TO

INTEMPERANCE,

FROM

Salem, Ohio, Monthly Meeting of Friends.

ADOPTED 4TH MONTH, 24TH, 1850.

CLEVELAND:
SMEAD & COWLES' PRESS.
1850.



Admonitions in relation to Intemperance.

By Oliver Johnson.

THE Salem Monthly Meeting of Friends, deeply impressed by a sense of the manifold evils arising from the use of Intoxicating Drinks, and tenderly concerned to exert whatever of influence it may possess, as a Religious Society, in favor of Sobriety and Good Morals, is constrained, after due reflection, to issue this Address. It is our conscientious conviction that, in so doing, we not only act in accordance with one of the most important and solemn of our Religious Testimonies, but in harmony with the most sacred obligations imposed upon us by a Religion whose chief element is a Divine Benevolence, transcending the bounds of Party and Sect, and co-extensive with Humanity itself. We would speak words of friendly admonition not only to the members of our own Religious Society, but to the community in which we dwell, and over which, for good or for evil, our precept and our practice must ever exert a measure of influence, however small. We would, if possible, by an earnest and affectionate appeal to the hearts and consciences of our neighbors and friends, awaken in them a deeper sense of the evils of Intemperance, and excite them to greater diligence and faithfulness in the use of all rightful and appropriate means to stay the progress of a vice which numbers its victims by millions, and degrades and brutalizes beings created by God in his own image, and but 'a little lower than angels.' We desire to speak, not words of reproach and recrimination, but of holy solicitude, humility and charity, relying not upon worldly wisdom, but upon the Divine Spirit, to give efficacy to the truths we utter.

The evils of Intemperance are obvious to every reflecting mind. They are seen and felt by the friends of Sobriety, and

scarcely denied even by those who connive at their perpetration. They have often been depicted by an eloquence which we cannot hope to imitate, still less to reach; and they are written, as by a Divinely indignant but beneficent hand, in the trembling nerves, the bloated face, the inflamed eye, the waning intellect and the polluted soul of the drunkard. They cluster in terrible reality about his desolate home, and appeal to us in the poverty, the tears and the agonies of his wife and children. They are written, as with a pen of fire, upon the walls of our court-houses, jails and penitentiaries, and echoed in the wailings and despair of thousands sinking to untimely and dishonored graves. Alas! none but an inspired pen can adequately describe evils of such fearful magnitude and such wide extent. For a time we indulged the pleasing hope, that the friends of Sobriety had almost achieved a victory over a vice of which these evils are the bitter but legitimate fruits; but recent inquiry and observation have forced upon us the unwelcome conviction, that new and more vigorous, and perhaps long-continued efforts will be needed before the ravages of the fell Destroyer can be effectually staid. We have reason to fear that the practice of drinking alcoholic liquors has been for some time gaining in our midst; that some who, for a season, were temperate, have fallen away, and that many young men, having tasted the cup, are in imminent danger of sinking into habits of drunkenness and shame. At such a moment we feel constrained to reiterate our former testimonies, and to lift up, in the ears of our fellow-men, a voice of warning and remonstrance.

I. In the first place, let us speak to those who are addicted to the use of alcoholic stimulants. Fellow-immortals! listen, we entreat you, to our calm, but earnest words. We behold you the slaves of a pernicious Appetite, and we would, if it were possible, break the chains which every day's indulgence is making stronger. We see you wandering in a road which leads to debasement, shame and death; and we would fain call you back to the ways of pleasantness and peace, to the straight and narrow path which leads ever upward to God and Heaven. We see you

wasting in the haunts of vice the precious hours which should be employed in the cultivation of your noblest powers, or in the discharge of the duties you owe to your families or to society ; and we would remind you that time is a most precious gift of God, which cannot be squandered without guilt. We see you indulging a habit which tends to degrade your moral natures, to enfeeble your intellects, to sear your consciences and corrupt your hearts ; and how can we forbear to warn you of your danger, to call after you in the language of sorrowful entreaty, bidding you take heed to your steps before it be too late ? Some of you are young, and we see you training yourselves not for happiness and usefulness, but for a life of shame and degradation to yourselves, and a ministry of wretchedness and wo to others ; and how can we look on in silence, when every impulse of our hearts, every sentiment awakened by our Religion, and every tie that binds us to God or links us to man impels us to speak to you in tones of love, and bid you beware of the abyss that yawns in your path ?

Do any of you flatter yourselves that there is no danger in the '*moderate*' use of intoxicating drinks ? Do you say, 'I will indulge *temperately* in the social glass, but never permit myself to fall into the vulgar habit of drunkenness?' Alas ! what multitudes have found by experience the weakness of such a resolution ! How many, by this siren song of the tempter, have been lured through years of misery and shame, to a drunkard's grave ! All experience testifies, that the appetite for alcoholic stimulants, unnatural in its origin, grows stronger by indulgence, until at length it overmasters the power of self-control, and the '*moderate*' drinker becomes a confirmed inebriate. There is, there can be no safety but in *Total Abstinence*.

If intoxicating liquors were not in themselves hurtful, there might, in spite of all the evils resulting from their use, be a plausible argument against the doctrine just named. But it has been settled by evidence amounting to positive demonstration, that, in whatever form they may be taken into the human system, they are injurious to health and life. This statement can only be qualified by a plea for the use of the article as a medicine, and the justice even of this qualification is denied by many scientific

enough for us to be able to say, with undoubting confidence, and with a perfect certainty that no intelligent person will contradict us, that their use as a beverage, under whatever circumstances, is not only unnecessary but pernicious. We might, if it were needful, fortify this position by an appeal to the experience of members of our own Society, and by testimony that could be neither impugned nor resisted; but the limits of this Address will not permit us to offer proofs of a truth which few, we apprehend, will venture to deny. We will only remark, that the Physicians of the land, of whatever school, are almost without exception impressed with the truth now stated; and on such a point it would seem that their testimony, especially when confirmed by so wide an experience and observation, ought to satisfy even Incredulity itself.

Here, then, we take our stand, and say to both the drunkard and the occasional drinker, you are on the road to ruin—your steps take hold on death. Abandon at once the intoxicating bowl, and resolve that henceforth you will ‘touch not, taste not, handle not’ the accursed beverage which has destroyed millions of the human race, dragging them down from their exaltation as immortal beings to a level with beasts’ and creeping things.—Think not that you can take coals of fire into your bosoms and not be burned—that you can safely tamper with an evil which, however its effects may be for a time disguised, ‘biteth at last like a serpent and stingeth like an adder.’ Consult the records of crime, and note what a vast multitude, whose prospects in life were once flattering as yours, were lured from the path of virtue by the temptation with which you are now presumptuously dallying. By all your hopes of happiness here, and of a blissful immortality beyond the grave, heed the voice of Reason, of Conscience and of God.

II. To those who are engaged in the Traffic of Intoxicating Liquors, let us speak with an earnestness resulting from a deep conviction of the terrible evils which that Traffic is adapted to spread through the community, and of the crimes to which it so directly leads. You are men like ourselves. To you, as to us,

God speaks in the 'still small voice' of Conscience, reminding you ever of your accountability, and bidding you weigh the consequences of the course you are pursuing. The effects of the traffic in which you are engaged are ever before you. You see them in the bloodshot eye and haggard face of the inebriate; you hear them in his ribald jest, his idiotic laugh, and the profane imprecation that falls from his lips; you know that his home is a place of want, and wretchedness, and agony; that his wife and children sadly need the pittance he offers you for the means wherewith to subdue the cravings of an unholy appetite. And yet, with all this before you, you still minister to his degradation. You see the young man, in whom the thirst for the intoxicating draught is just beginning to be developed, coming to your bar with stealthy step, and a look that betrays the shame that is not yet obliterated from his mind; you know, perhaps, that a father's or a mother's heart is wrung with anguish at the thought of his aberrations from the path of Sobriety; and yet you will not withhold from him the cup whose fiery contents madden the brain, deaden the moral sense, and undermine the foundations of his manhood and self-respect.

You are aware that three-fourths of all the Pauperism and the Crime of our land are the fruits of Intemperance; and yet, with this startling fact before you, you continue in a business fraught with such fatal consequences. You must know, for experience and observation have taught you, that 'moderate drinking is the downhill road to drunkenness'; and yet you gain your livelihood by a traffic which feeds the fires of temptation in the breasts of the young, and lures them on through paths of sensuality and shame to utter destruction. O stay, we entreat you, your work of death. Cease, at once and forever, to put the bottle to the lips of your neighbour and to make him drunken. Minister no longer to the depraved appetites and passions of your fellow-men, but seek with earnestness to lift them above temptation, to develop their godlike powers and fit them for their exalted destiny.

III. We address a few words to the friends of Temperance. You are engaged in a noble and godlike enterprise. May you

never dishonor it by unholy passion, nor counteract its progress by the use of unrighteous means. Remember that the weapons by which alone a moral evil can be extirpated are not those of Force, but

“The mild arms of TRUTH and LOVE,
Made mighty through the LIVING GOD.”

Truly has it been said that ‘Force never yet gained one true victory.’ It is only by the faithful and persevering presentation of Truth, by appeals to the hearts and consciences of your fellow-men, that you can hope to accomplish the work in which you have enlisted. We are constrained to believe that the recent increase of Intemperance in our midst is to be attributed in a great measure to a forgetfulness of this fundamental truth. The friends of Temperance, weary in well-doing and impatient at what seemed to them the slow progress of the cause, have resorted to measures not consistent with the highest standard of Right. Secret associations, the vain trappings which appeal to the love of display, forceful appliances, the language of men and passion—these we fear have been too often employed. All such instrumentalities, however, should be discarded, and the friends of Temperance should come back upon the ground of a simple and earnest faith in the power of Truth. They should never grow weary of presenting before the minds of those whom they address the simple facts and truths which, under God, have been so wonderfully efficacious in times past. It is by steady and unremitting labor, by union and co-operation on the part of its friends—a union cemented by mutual confidence in each other, and an unwavering faith in God—and not by any sudden excitement, or secret combination, that the cause of Temperance is to be carried forward to its final consummation.

IV. To Professors of the Christian Religion, of whatever denomination, we desire affectionately to suggest, that they may render efficient service to this sacred cause by their deliberate and emphatic testimony in its favor. Professing to be disciples of Him who came to seek and to save the lost, to raise the fallen and the degraded, they should not be indifferent to an evil which fills

our land with mourning and wo. Every Religious Society, however small, exerts an influence not only over the minds of its members, but upon the community at large. If every such Society in our land were to speak out its earnest convictions on this subject, and bear a faithful testimony in favor of TOTAL ABSTINENCE, we are confident that great good would thereby be done. Many minds would be reached by this agency that would otherwise remain unmoved, and the admonitions of Religious bodies would greatly promote individual action. Surely no work could be more appropriate to such bodies than this. An Apostle has said that Christians are ‘a peculiar people, zealous of good works;’ and what work is better than that which proposes to stay the tide of Intemperance, to redeem the drunkard from his cups, and to preserve the young from temptation? What right have we to call ourselves Christians, if in respect to this enterprise of philanthropy we play the part of the Priest and Levite, instead of imitating the example of the Good Samaritan? We can conceive of no higher or nobler end to be sought by a Religious Society than the destruction of a brutal vice and the moral and spiritual elevation of man. Such an object is worthy to task the best and holiest energies of individual Christians and of Christian associations in every age of the world. It is to Religious Societies that mankind have a right to look for the highest examples of moral purity and the most devoted zeal in every work of Practical Righteousness; and in so far as such Societies fail in this, they come short of the end for which alone they should be created. They should be ‘cities set upon an hill, whose light cannot be hid,’ and the rays of which, penetrating through the surrounding darkness, should guide the erring and the lost children of men back to their Father’s house.

V. We close with a few words addressed more particularly to individual members of our own Religious Society, into whose hands these pages may fall. We counsel you, dear Friends, on this, as on all other subjects, to follow the Light of Divine Truth, as made manifest in your own souls. It is not the object of this Address to supersede the necessity of individual labors in the

cause of Temperance. On the contrary, we desire to 'stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance' of the truths which all are too liable to forget, and to quicken your devotion to principles of the highest importance to your own peace and the welfare of mankind. When Societies, whether Religious or Philanthropic, have done all that lies in their power, there will remain much to be accomplished by the fidelity of individuals. The most important fruit of associated action is to be found in its tendency to arrest the attention and arouse the consciences of individuals, and quicken them to more earnest labors in their private and social relations. Is there among your neighbors either a temperate drinker or a drunkard? Perhaps a word of kindness from some of you, uttered at a moment when God shall bless you with the inflowings of his love, may save a brother from the dominion of a degrading vice. If you fail in this, you may at least minister consolation to a wife and children whose home is made wretched by the woes which throng the path of the inebriate. Do any of you know a young man who has fallen, or is in danger of falling, before this fearful temptation? Who knows but that your kind remonstrances may arouse him to a sense of his danger and keep him back from 'presumptuous sin'? An Apostle of Jesus has declared, that 'he that converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins;' and Jesus himself has told us that 'joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine which need no repentance.' Perhaps your influence, rightly directed, may induce the dealer in intoxicating drinks to abandon an occupation fraught with such dire calamities to his fellow-men; and how unspeakable precious to you, ever after, will be the reflection, that you have thus been the humble instruments in the hands of God of drying up even one of the thousand sources of a soul-destroying vice! We exhort you, then, to improve every right opening for usefulness in this blessed cause, and to esteem it your highest honor, in this and other ways, to labor for the elevation of man and his deliverance from the dominion of sensuality and sin.

'Whoever aids a sorrowing, struggling brother,
By kindly word, or deed, or friendly token,
Shall win the favor of our Heavenly Father,
Who judges evil and rewards the good,
And who hath linked the race of man together
In one vast, universal Brotherhood.'

At the Salem Monthly Meeting of Friends, held (in Salem, Columbiana County, Ohio,) Fourth month, 24th, the Committee on the subject of Intemperance, (appointed in First month last,) produced the foregoing Address, which was read and accepted; and DANIEL BONSALL, GEORGE GARRETSON, OLIVER JOHNSON and DAVID STANTON were appointed to receive donations, and publish such a number as they receive money to pay for.

Attest,

ISAAC BOONE, Clerk.